

It was after a period of strong winds and heavy rain that, sometime during February 1991, I looked round the back of my shed and saw to my dismay that the plywood had been dislodged by the wind leaving the tank with no protection, consequently it was filled with rainwater to a depth of over 15cms. I drained off the water and carefully parted the extremely soggy newspapers and was surprised to see apparently healthy larvae. In fact only two larvae seemed to have succumbed, whether this was as a result of their forced submersion it was impossible to say. The newspapers were so soggy that replacing them without unduly disturbing the larvae was impossible, so I drained off as much water as I could and returned the tank behind the shed and replaced the plywood. During sunny periods in the early spring I placed the tank in an open position and larvae were seen briefly before they pupated, most among the newspapers (now considerably drier!) but some in the corners of the tank. In due course all the moths emerged between 21 and 25 May 1991.

The moorland haunts of this moth, at least in northern England, are often extremely wet, especially during the winter months, and in the wild overwintering larvae will presumably often be at risk of inundation. That they cope well with these conditions is borne out by my larvae which may have been completely submerged for up to three or four weeks without suffering significant losses. Mr Eales utilisation of *Sphagnum* moss exposed to the elements together with my own experience suggests that it is beneficial to keep the larvae in wet conditions during overwintering, even though this would appear to fly in the face of conventional wisdom for keeping mould at bay.—H. E. BEAUMONT, 37 Melton Green, West Melton, Rotherham, South Yorkshire S63 6AA.

### **Moths: some recent records of advanced or extended flight periods and of bivoltinism**

On 13 January 2002, a female December Moth *Poecilocampa populi* (L.) (Lasiocampidae) was captured in my m.v. trap at Garston, near Watford, Hertfordshire (VC 20). The flight period of this species is usually quoted as between October and December, but J. W. Tutt (1901-1905. *Practical Hints for the Field Lepidopterist* – reprinted 1994), states (Part I, p.6) that “late imagines of *P. populi* are still to be obtained at light, if mild, during the first fortnight of January”. Plant (2001, *Ent. Rec.* **113**: 63-64) reports persistence until 6 January 2001 at a site in South Hampshire.

Plant (*op. cit.*) also collates a number of records of Spring Usher *Agriopsis leucophaearia* (D. & S.) (Geometridae) during January 2001, involving a total of nine English vice-counties north to South-west Yorkshire. As Plant observes, most sources list the flight period for Spring Usher as mid-February to mid-March, although Barrett (1901, *Lepidoptera of the British Islands* **VII**: 242) adds “in very forward seasons at the end of January”. Tutt (*op. cit.*, Part II, p.1) reports that regular searching of park fences at Calcot (in Berkshire) in 1890 “produced fresh specimens of *Hybernia* (= *Agriopsis*) *leucophaearia* abundantly from January 16th to March 6th”; the first date invites comparison with the recent records reviewed by Plant.

On 27 September 2001, single examples of *Orthopygia glaucinalis* (L.) (Pyralidae) and of Small Blood-vein *Scopula imitaria* (Hb.) (Geometridae) occurred in my Garston m.v. trap. Autumn records of both species appear to have become frequent in recent years, and are probably no longer reported by many lepidopterists. In an excellent article, B. K. West (1989. *Ent. Rec.* **102**: 109) draws attention to the recent increase in records of second brood Small Blood-vein and discusses discrepancies between statements concerning this phenomenon offered by modern and by older textbooks, pointing out that Barrett (1902, op. cit. **VIII**) states that a partial second brood of *S. imitaria* occurs in hot seasons in late August or September in very mild and sheltered districts. West suggests that, as the use of m.v. light was not available to the lepidopterist of the earlier era, *S. imitaria* was probably significantly commoner in the second generation in the nineteenth century than was the case through much of the twentieth century.

These last points are perhaps worth consideration in connection with the observations discussed earlier. It could be added that, prior to the recent interest in climatic change, the incentive to document unexpected dates of appearance in moths may have been less strongly felt than it currently is; such records might in the past have been more readily dismissed.

It goes without saying that none of the above in any way undermines the importance of reporting all dates that appear unusual.— C. M. EVERETT, The Lodge, Kyles Drive, Watford, Hertfordshire WD25 9NZ.

### More reports of early insects

There have been several further reports of unseasonally early appearances of adult moths and other insects. The following have been received and are now placed on record:

#### LEPIDOPTERA

##### Gracillariidae

*Phyllonorycter messaniella* (Zell) Friar's Grove, Colchester, North Essex (VC 19), 25 March 2002 (B. Goodey).

##### Pyralidae

*Pyrausta aurata* (Scop.) – Eltisley, Cambridgeshire (VC 29). Warming up (just emerged?) on a stone in a herb garden at 11 am on 12 March 2002 (W. Kirby); Hertford, Hertfordshire (VC 20), one at light on 19 March 2002 (A. Wood).

*Aphomia sociella* (L.) – the Bee Moth. Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire, (VC 20). 1 ♀ at m.v. light at around 21.00 hours on 2 April 2002 (P. Clack). The bulk of dated Hertfordshire records fall in July and August, with a few in June; until now the earliest had been 24 May 1989.

##### Geometridae

*Ligdia adustata* (D. & S.) – Scorched Carpet. Wheathampstead, Hertfordshire (VC 20). A pristine example at a lit window, 5 April 2002 (T. Chapman). Of the dated Hertfordshire records, the previous earliest was on 24 May 1989.